

Digest of Education Statistics 1997

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FOREWORD

This 1997 edition of the *Digest of Education Statistics* is the 33rd in a series of publications initiated in 1962. (The *Digest* has been issued annually except for combined editions for the years 1977-78, 1983-84, and 1985-86.) Its primary purpose is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the broad field of American education from kindergarten through graduate school. The *Digest* includes a selection of data from many sources, both government and private, and draws especially on the results of surveys and activities carried out by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The publication contains information on a variety of subjects in the field of education statistics, including the number of schools and colleges, teachers, enrollments, and graduates, in addition to educational attainment, finances, federal funds for education, employment and income of graduates, libraries, and international education. Supplemental information on population trends, attitudes on education, education characteristics of the labor force, government finances, and economic trends provides background for evaluating education data. Although the *Digest* contains important information on federal education funding, more detailed information on federal activities is available from federal education program offices. For example, the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs supports the National Clearinghouse on Bilingual Education, which compiles information on students and teachers involved in bilingual education.

The *Digest* is divided into seven chapters: "All Levels of Education," "Elementary and Secondary Education," "Postsecondary Education," "Federal Programs for Education and Related Activities," "Out-

comes of Education," "International Comparisons of Education," and "Learning Resources and Technology." To qualify for inclusion, material must be nationwide in scope and of current interest and value. The introduction includes a brief overview of current trends in American education, which supplements the tabular materials in chapters 1 through 7. Information on the structure of the statistical tables is contained in the "Guide to Tabular Presentation." The "Guide to Sources" provides a brief synopsis of the surveys used to generate the tabulations for the *Digest*. Also, a "Definitions" section is included to help readers understand terms. To make analyses more convenient for researchers, many new *Digest* tables include standard errors. In addition to updating many of the statistics that have appeared in previous years, this edition contains a significant amount of new material, including:

- Findings from the Third International Math and Science Study, the largest comparison of international achievement ever undertaken, tables 395 to 402;
- Percent of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 at various math and science proficiency levels in 1996, tables 119 and 124;
- Percent of public schools and school classrooms with Internet access, table 415.

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Many people have contributed in one way or another to the development of the *Digest*. Thomas D. Snyder was responsible for the overall development and preparation of this *Digest* which was prepared under the general direction of Mary Frase.

Charlene M. Hoffman provided technical assistance in all phases of its preparation and was responsible for Chapter 4, "Federal Programs for Education and Related Activities," and for tables on degrees conferred. Claire Geddes developed the text for chapter introductions and was responsible for materials dealing with higher education enrollment, finance, and faculty characteristics. William Sonnenberg provided statistical computing consultation on all phases of the report. Celestine Davis provided statistical assistance on materials dealing with educational attainment and student assessment. Debra Gerald and William Hussar prepared projections of school enrollment and finance statistics.

A number of individuals outside the Center also expended large amounts of time and effort on the *Digest*. Sherrie Aitken, Irma Alemar, Judy Blake, Ismail Iro, Michael Neimat, William Scarbrough, Linda Shafer, and Patricia Thomson of CSR, Inc., provided research and statistical assistance. In the Office of

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This year's edition of the *Digest* has received extensive reviews by individuals within and outside the Department of Education. We wish to thank them for their time and expert advice. In the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), W. Vance Grant and Duc-Le To reviewed the entire manuscript. Rosemary Clark (U.S. Bureau of the Census) also reviewed the entire document. Ellen Bradburn of the Education Statistics Services Institute reviewed substantial portions of the document. OERI staff who reviewed portions of the manuscript were: Sam Barbett, Jonaki Bose, Patricia Q. Brown, Shelley Burns, Adrienne Chute, Mike Cohen, Mary Frase, Debra Gerald, Steven Gorman, Kerry Gruber, Frank Johnson, Andrew Malizio, Marilyn McMillen, Frank Morgan, Shi-Chang Wu, and Linda Zimble. Agency reviews were conducted by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, the Office of Vocational Adult Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, and Budget Service.

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1997, about 66.3 million persons were enrolled in American schools and colleges (table 1). About 4.0 million were employed as elementary and secondary school teachers and as college faculty. Other professional, administrative, and support staff of educational institutions numbered 4.4 million. Thus about 75 million people were involved, directly or indirectly, in providing or receiving formal education. In a nation with a population of about 268 million, more than 1 out of every 4 persons participated in formal education.

Elementary/Secondary Enrollment

Since the enrollment rates of kindergarten and elementary school age children have not changed much in recent years, increases in elementary school enrollment have been driven primarily by increases in the number of young people. Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools rose 18 percent between 1985 and 1997. The fastest growth occurred in the elementary grades, where enrollment rose 23 percent over the same period, from 27.0 million to a record high of 33.2 million in 1997 (table 2). Secondary enrollments declined 8 percent from 1985 to 1990, but then rose by 16 percent from 1990 to 1997, for a net increase of 6 percent.

Private school enrollment grew more slowly than public school enrollment over this period, rising 6 percent, from 5.6 million in 1985 to 5.9 million in 1997. As a result, the percentage of students enrolled in private schools declined from 12 percent in 1985 to 11 percent in 1996.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) forecasts record levels of public school enrollment during the late 1990s. The fall 1997 public school enrollment marks a new record and new records are expected every year through the early 2000s (table 3). Between fall 1997 and fall 2007, public elementary enrollment is projected to grow by one half of one percent, while public secondary school enrollment is expected to rise by 13 percent.

Higher Education

College enrollment rose to a record level of 14.5 million in fall 1992 and is expected to increase in 1997, after falling slightly between 1993 and 1996 (table 3). Despite decreases in the traditional college-age population during the 1980s and early 1990s,

total enrollment has remained relatively high because of the increased participation of older women students and a high rate of college attendance for recent high school graduates (tables 171 and 180). The number of part-time students has generally increased at a faster rate than full-time students (table 169).

Teachers

An estimated 3.1 million elementary and secondary school teachers will be engaged in classroom instruction in the fall of 1997 (table 4). This number has risen in recent years, up about 17 percent since 1987. The number of public school teachers in 1997 will be about 2.7 million and the number in private schools will be about 0.4 million. About 1.9 million teachers are expected to teach in elementary schools, while about 1.2 million will teach at the secondary level (table 4).

The number of public school teachers has risen at a slightly faster rate than the number of students over the past 10 years, resulting in a small decrease in the pupil/teacher ratio. In the fall of 1997, there were 17.3 public school pupils per teacher compared with 17.6 public school pupils per teacher 10 years earlier. During the same time period, the pupil/teacher ratio in private schools fell from 15.5 to 15.0 (table 64). Despite the historical trend towards lower pupil/teacher ratios, the fluctuations since 1990 suggest stability in the pupil/teacher ratio.

The salaries of public school teachers, which lost purchasing power to inflation during the 1970s, rose faster than the inflation rate in the 1980s. The rising salaries reflect an interest by state and local education agencies in boosting teacher salary schedules and, to some extent, an increase in teachers' experience and education levels (tables 68, 69, and 77). The value of teachers' salaries, after adjustment for inflation, rose one and a half percent between 1986–87 and 1996–97. Since 1990–91, the average salary for teachers actually fell slightly after adjusting for inflation, offsetting increases in the 1980s. The average salary for teachers in 1996–97 was \$38,509 (table 77).

Public Perception

Public perception about problems facing the local public schools has shifted in the past several years.

Between 1985 and 1990, an increasing proportion of people believed that drug use was a major problem facing schools. Then, the proportion of people who felt drug use was a major problem facing schools fell, from 38 percent in 1990 to 7 percent in 1995, before rising again to 16 percent in 1996. Lack of discipline was cited by 15 percent of the population; fighting, gangs, and violence was cited by 14 percent; and the lack of financial support was cited as a major problem by 13 percent of the population (table 23).

Faculty and Staff

During the fall of 1993, there were 915,000 faculty in higher education institutions. Making up this figure were 546,000 full-time, and 370,000 part-time faculty (table 223). In 1992, full-time instructors generally taught more hours and more students than part-time instructors, with 61 percent of full-time instructors teaching eight or more hours per week and two-thirds teaching 50 or more students. About 30 percent of part-time instructors taught eight or more hours per week and 30 percent taught 50 or more students (tables 228 and 229).

White males constitute a disproportionate share of college instructional faculty and staff. Overall, about 58 percent of full-time faculty and 49 percent of part-time faculty are white males. However, this distribution varies substantially by age of faculty. Among full-time faculty under 30, the balance between male and female faculty is even and 21 percent of the faculty are minorities. Among full-time faculty between 60 and 64 years of age, 79 percent of faculty are males and minorities amount to 12 percent (table 230).

Student Performance

Reading

Overall, the reading achievement scores for the country's 9-, 13- and 17-year-old students are mixed. Reading scores for 9- and 13-year-olds were somewhat higher in 1996 than they were in 1971. However, there has been little change since the mid 1980s. The reading performance of 17-year-olds was about the same in 1996 as it was in 1971. Many of the advancements in performance that had been made in earlier years among black students have not continued or have reversed. Black 13- and 17-year-olds exhibited higher reading performance in 1996 than in 1971. Black 9-year-olds' performance improved significantly between 1971 and 1980, but it has not improved further. The performance levels of white 9- and 13-year olds also rose between 1971 and 1996. Separate data for Hispanics were not gathered in 1971, but changes between 1975 and 1996 indicate an increase among 9-year-olds. There was no significant difference between the 1975 and

1996 reading performance among 13- and 17-year-old Hispanics (table 107).

Mathematics

Results from assessments of mathematics proficiency indicate that 9- and 13-year-old students improved their performance between 1973 and 1996. However, there has been little change for 9-year-olds since 1990, and the performance of older students on advanced mathematical operations has been stable (table 118). The proportion of 17-year-olds who demonstrated skill with moderately complex procedures and reasoning rose from 52 percent in 1978 to 60 percent in 1996. During the same time period, the proportion of 17-year-olds with skill in multi-step problem solving and algebra remained unchanged (table 119).

White, black, and Hispanic students improved their mathematics performance between 1973 and 1996, among all three age groups. In contrast to some of the declines noted in reading since the mid 1980s, mathematics scores for white, black, and Hispanic 9-, 13-, and 17-year-olds improved or remained stable between 1986 and 1996 (table 118).

A 1996 voluntary assessment of the states found that mathematics proficiency varied widely among eighth graders in the 42 jurisdictions (40 states, 1 territory, and the District of Columbia) that participated in the program (table 120). Overall, 62 percent of eighth grade students performed at or above the basic level in mathematics. Only four states and the District of Columbia had fewer than 50 percent of students performing at least at the basic level in math. Ten states had 70 percent or more of their students performing at or above the basic level.

Science

Long-term changes in science performance have been mixed, though changes over the past 10 years have been generally positive. In 1996, science performance among 17-year-olds was lower than in 1970, but higher than in 1986. The science performance level of 13-year-olds was higher in 1996 than in 1986, recouping the earlier declines. The science performance of 9-year-olds increased between 1986 and 1996, after showing no significant change between 1970 and 1986 (table 126).

The science performance of white 9- and 13-year-olds was about the same in 1996 as it was in 1970, and the performance of 17-year-olds was lower in 1996. However, the performance at each of the 3 age groups was higher in 1996 than in 1986. Black and Hispanic 9- and 13-year-olds had higher science performance in 1996 than in the 1970s. Black 17-year-olds showed a pattern consistent with white 13-year-olds with a decline through 1982 and an increase by 1996. Despite significant gains by younger

black and Hispanic students, their average performance remains lower than for white students. Although the performance gap between black and white students has narrowed, the science performance for black 13-year-olds was slightly lower than the average for white 9-year-olds in 1996 (table 126).

International Comparisons

The results of a 1995 international assessment in math and science show that U.S. fourth and eighth graders compare more favorably with other countries in science than in mathematics. In mathematics, U.S. eighth graders scored below the international average, falling below 20 of the 41 countries tested. Fourth graders performed above the international average of 26 countries tested, scoring below 7 countries, including Singapore, Korea, and Japan. U.S. students at both the fourth and eighth grade levels scored above the international average in science. Eighth grade students in the U.S. were outperformed by four out of 41 countries. Fourth grade students once again compared more favorably with their international counterparts than eighth grade students. Only one country outperformed the U.S. students in science out of 26 countries who participated in the fourth grade assessment (tables 395, 397, 401, and 402).

Graduates and Degrees

The number of high school graduates in 1996–97 totaled about 2.6 million. Approximately 2.4 million graduated from public schools and less than 0.3 million graduated from private schools. The number of high school graduates has declined from its peak in 1976–77 when 3.2 million people earned their diplomas. The dropout rate declined over this period, from 14 percent of all 16- to 24-year-olds in 1977 to 11 percent in 1996 (tables 99 and 103).

The number of degrees conferred by institutions of higher education during the 1995–96 school year by degree level has been estimated: 532,000 associate degrees; 1,186,000 bachelor's degrees; 406,000 master's degrees; 79,000 first-professional degrees; and 44,000 doctor's degrees (table 244).

The Bureau of the Census has collected annual statistics on the educational attainment of the population in terms of years of school completed. These data indicate that, between 1980 and 1996, the pro-

portion of the adult population 25 years of age and over with 4 years of high school or more rose from 69 percent to 82 percent and the proportion of adults with at least 4 years of college increased from 17 percent to 24 percent. In contrast, the proportion of young adults (25- to 29-year-olds) completing high school remained virtually unchanged (table 8).

Expenditures

Expenditures for public and private education, from preprimary through graduate school, are estimated at \$564 billion for 1996–97. The expenditures of elementary and secondary schools are expected to total about \$340 billion for 1996–97, while those for institutions of higher education will be about \$225 billion. Viewed in another context, the total expenditures for education are expected to amount to about 7.4 percent of the gross domestic product in 1996–97, about the same percentage as in the recent past (table 31).

Summary

The statistical highlights in this section of the report provide a quantitative description of the current American education scene. Assessment data indicate that there have been improvements in mathematics and science performance between 1986 and 1996. A higher proportion of high school graduates are going on to college. Yet, wide variations in student proficiency from state to state and mediocre mathematics scores of American students in international assessments pose challenges.

NOTE: Readers should be aware of the limitations of statistics. These limitations vary with the exact nature of a particular survey. For example, estimates based on a sample of institutions will differ somewhat from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken using the same survey procedures. Although some of the surveys conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics are complete, census-type surveys, all surveys are subject to design, reporting, and processing errors and errors due to nonresponse. More information on survey methodologies can be found in the "Guide to Sources" in the appendix. Price indexes for inflation adjustments can be found in table 38.